

## ‘Growing up in Japan’

- 1) One rule of Japanese schools is that boys hair has to be the same length, with stringent requirements for how it must be cut. Girl’s skirts also have a length to neither exceed nor fall short of. Both sets must be the same. This uniformity in boys and girls drastically limits the expression of individual differences among each set and encourages conformity to the standards provided. Clearly Japanese students live a much more regimented school experience than those from the US, where individualism reigns. Although New Castle schools did at one point adopt a dress code similar to Japan’s.
- 2) Individualism is the theme of western culture. Everybody does their own thing, expressing their own uniqueness. Conformity is practically frowned upon, though no less common if only in other ways. On the whole however, we are individualistic, whereas Japan with its conformity and uniformity as part of its culture makes it more collectivistic. Japanese culture differs in one big way from the individualistic west because of its collectivist leanings.
- 3 ) The closest US word to conformity in Japan is harmony. Given this and proposed benefits it would seem that uniform dress would have a harmonious effect on people here, too, perhaps leading to collectivist like cooperation. Maybe this is true. It is striking though that in America uniform attire is reserved mostly, with some exceptions, for prison. From my experience this one size fits all approach is deleterious to one developing themselves individualistically. This could be the American in me talking, but my experience with a dress code robbed me of

expressing myself and made me feel like just another number out of some dystopia. However my conclusion is that evidence of effectiveness should be evaluated to see if these practices give any benefit or perhaps the opposite.

- 4) Societies do benefit from working together. The Japanese regulations could foster a sense of sameness conducive to increasing cooperation. However, we are not merely cogs. People need to express themselves and have an innate desire to set themselves apart. Removing so-called frivolous choices from students could help them to concentrate on school. But just as with society, dress codes may eliminate individualistic tendencies that distract from the group, but at the cost of expression which is also important to development. There must be a balance.
- 5) The Ministry of Education in Tokyo has already deemed the measures excessive, thought typical for the time. For the time. Japan would have to isolate greatly and work to resist outside influences in order to protect its culture. Because globalization is attractive many people in other countries are attracted to it, and becoming more like the West is popular. Though there are those in other countries that are attracted to Japan's culture even though the West is the standard. This suggests that the culture should endure, though perhaps some quality of life improvements can be made without sacrificing its self to conformity with the western ideal. Perhaps when it comes to defending their culture their collectivist leanings should be influenced a bit by western individualism that would foster pride enough to endure.